

My fellow citizens:

I have just sworn before you and God the same oath of office that my predecessors have taken for nearly 200 years.

Yet,  
for all the thousands of you who have honored us with your presence here today,  
and for all who will hear or read about this ceremony in the hours and days to come -

- the two people that I most wish could be here with me  
-- are my mother and father.

I lost my father 14 years ago,  
my mother four years ago.

But if they were here,  
I would tell them that what they taught me was true  
-- that here in America,  
-- if you work hard,  
-- love your country,  
-- and believe in the goodness this land has to offer,  
-- anything is possible

That the son of an immigrant steelworker and a working mother can go on to lead the greatest state in the greatest country on earth.

My story is my own,  
but it is not unique.

From the banks of the mighty Mississippi to the melting pot of Chicago; from the prairies of Central Illinois to the hard-working coalfields in Southern Illinois,  
-- the dream of a better life for our kids has united the people of this great state for almost two centuries.

In so many ways,  
the hopes our parents had for us have come to pass.

And now the question for us today is -

- What are the dreams we have for our children?  
And what will we do  
- together  
- to make those dreams come true?

My goal as governor is as simple as it is profound  
-- to create a future as great as our past,  
a state as grand as our potential,  
and a government as good as our people.

For most of the past two centuries,  
Illinois has been the most essential state in the most indispensable nation on earth.

And it is time for us to reclaim that proud mantle once again.

Today, we face a new challenge

This - is a moment of crisis.

Some will say it is time to merely manage problems,  
not solve them  
; a time to give up on our dreams,  
not pursue them.

I say we must move forward,  
as Illinois has always done in times of crisis.

We will meet our challenges head on --  
and we will do it by rejecting the politics of mediocrity and corruption.

You voted for change;  
I intend to deliver it.

John F. Kennedy once said that his biggest surprise upon taking office was learning that things were actually as bad as he had been saying they were.

Well,  
when it comes to our state's budget deficit,  
it's my sad duty to report to you that things are actually worse

--the legacy we've been left with on this inauguration day is nearly a staggering  
\$5 billion deficit;

an economy where too many are left behind;  
a health care system that leaves our elderly at the mercy of drug companies;  
rising tuition costs that make the dream of college unattainable for too many families;

and a system of corruption that has become too commonplace,  
too accepted and too entrenched.

I did not run for governor to be a caretaker.

I did not run to manage a state of decline.

I did not run to maintain the status quo.

I am not here to serve just the few.

The mandate we claim today from the people of Illinois and for the people of Illinois is simple and clear  
-- no more business as usual.

No more cutting corners.

No more ducking the tough choices.

It is time for a change.

And make no mistake about it -

- today is the first day of a new beginning for Illinois.

You know...

most people don't think about their government very often.

Most go about their lives every day without much thought about what's happening here in Springfield.

But as we grapple with a budget crisis,  
as we clean house and re-write ethics laws,  
as we work to create jobs and improve our schools, just know that as we bring the change you voted  
for,  
you will be our inspiration and our guide.

The only thing greater than the struggle our state has before it is the strength of our families and the  
goodness of our people.

And we - will not let you down.

We are,  
after all,  
a state of pioneers.

In the early 1800's, against the toughest of odds,  
settlers came to the prairies of the Illinois territory with the dream of building a better life.

We are a state of strong values  
- values that still endure.

Abraham Lincoln didn't just happen to come of age in Illinois, he drew his strength from our state  
- and our state drew its strength from him.

Let us never forget that when our nation was most divided,  
it was the state of Illinois that united and led.

We are also a state of working families

– We know there is honor in working hard.

There is dignity in making steel, cars, machine tools, software, in cleaning a school, teaching a class,  
plowing the field,  
mining for coal,  
nursing a patient,  
driving a truck,  
patrolling our streets, providing day care,  
--- working the third shift.

As it is said in Proverbs, 'man is filled with good things -  
as surely as the work of his hands rewards him.'

If we will stand  
for anything in this new Administration,  
we will stand for this  
-- opportunity.

We will stand with working families for the right to earn a good, living wage.

And we will work as hard as you do to make the American dream real  
- for all of Illinois.

We are a state of great commerce and innovation.

Our Administration will honor work and we will help those who create that work

--- I've never understood those people who love jobs but hate business.

I will be a pro-growth governor.

We will help small businesses grow.

We will nurture an entrepreneurial spirit that fuels innovation and growth.

We will work to bring opportunity to every part of Illinois.

Throughout our history, Illinois has succeeded when our people have shared a common purpose.

Almost a million men and women from Illinois served in World War II.

And we know that in these uncertain times

--- if the trumpet summons us again

--- the young men and women of this state will answer that call and make this state and nation proud once more.

Let's work to make our resolve here at home match our resolve abroad.

In recent years,

we have begun to lose our sense of common purpose

- we are in danger of becoming a state divided between cities and small towns, between growing suburbs and shrinking rural communities, between the Gold Coast and the Southside.

Let us work to reaffirm the truth that we are stronger together than we are apart.

We are one Illinois.

Together,

we will change things for people.

(Spanish)

Illinois El Solo Uno

Somos Uno Sola Familia.

Juntos Cambiaremos El Futuro De Nuestros Pueblo - De Nuestra Gente.

What is the dream we dream for our children?

What is the change we seek to bring?

We will balance the budget

- and we will end the budget games.

It took years of mismanagement and waste to create the mess we now face

--- and it will take time and tough choices to fix it.

Some say it will take higher sales or income taxes to fix the mess we now inherit.

I say

--- we shouldn't ask taxpayers to bailout a flawed system in desperate need of reform.

I will consolidate state agencies

- there are too many, there is too much waste and too little accountability.

I will eliminate unnecessary boards and commissions  
- way stations for patronage at taxpayer expense.

We will re-build the Toll Authority from the ground up  
- it doesn't work;  
it wastes your time;  
it wastes your money;  
it tries your patience.

It's a failure.

And every driver knows it.

We are going to fix it.

And even in the face of tough times  
- we will offer new and bold ideas to help lower the cost of prescription drugs,  
improve our schools and create jobs.

We have a choice to make today  
--- we can choose to believe or we can choose to despair.

We cannot let cynicism become the death knell of progress.

We cannot let pessimism become a roadblock to innovation.

The one thing that we know for sure is that the future of Illinois has never been made  
- and will never be made - by cynics and naysayers

The future is always made by people who believe that here in America  
--- anything is possible.

At this time of crisis,  
the next chapter in our state's history is unwritten.

I see a state ready to pursue a common mission  
- I see an Illinois where innovation breeds success no matter where you are;  
I see world class schools where the circumstance of birth will not define the quality of your education;  
I see a state where parents are secure in knowing their neighborhoods are safe.

Where businesses are encouraged to grow and expand;  
I see a state where ethics laws are respected.

Where doing good is once again honored.

This - is my pledge to you.

I will tell it to you straight.  
I will give you my all.

I will reach across party lines.

I will seek out the best ideas.

I will govern as a reformer.

And I will lead this state in accordance with the values I learned from parents who sacrificed everyday to build a better life.

There are times when I wonder -  
what my father used to think -  
when he stood in front of that blast furnace at the steel mill.

Right about now,  
he'd be half-way through his shift;  
or maybe even getting ready to work another shift.

I imagine that he dreamed a lot of things for his family and for his children,  
but I'm not sure he ever imagined this.

But I do know that across Illinois right at this moment,  
there are millions of parents just like him who are hard at work, dreaming big dreams for their families  
--- trying to build a better life for their children.

They deserve a government that will respect those dreams and that will work just as hard as they do  
to help make those dreams come true.

I pledge to you to be that kind of governor and to run that kind of government.

I believe in the people of our state  
- in our ability to make life better.

And I believe we will rise to the challenge at hand.

This moment may be grave -  
but we are strong and good and determined.

With faith in God  
--- with a belief in each other  
--- and with a shared commitment to do what we know in our hearts is right  
--- We will create opportunity for every part of Illinois

--- for every family  
---and for every kid who dreams of a better life.

It is time for a new beginning.

Let that time begin right now.

Thank you.

God bless you,  
and God bless America.